

My Friend Tonya

I am here today on behalf of a dear friend. A few years ago, shortly after she started work at the business where I have been employed for over 20 years we met and became friends. We work in different departments but frequently talk in person and on the phone. At some point she decided that I was a person she could trust and shared her dreaded secret with me. If I had ever heard of the Sexual Offender Registry it did not make much impression on me. No one I know personally or am related to is on the List. This woman did not seem like much of a threat to me.

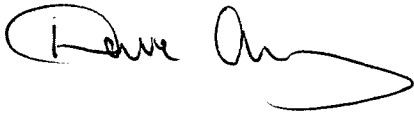
Her crime seems like a victimless one to me. A brief consensual adult relationship with a man would be no crime except for the circumstances. She was a Corrections Officer with the D.O.C. and he was a parolee.

For about three years I have watched a hard working, loving mother struggle to "take care of her business". She works 50 plus hour weeks all year long to pay her bills. Tonya is consistently rated excellent in customer satisfaction and has a smile for all. Recently her manager took a medical leave and this woman took it on herself to run the department in his absence with no compensation in return.

This is the way I see her life. Approximately 12 years ago she went to China to adopt a Chinese baby. This child is the light of her life. Last year we had an elderly customer come in for service and Tonya found out she had nowhere to go for Thanksgiving dinner. She took this person she barely knew to her own family dinner. Speaking of adoption, I have no children of my own but jokingly once said I would adopt her and of course her daughter. She became my "Little Girl" and I have tried to help make her life a little easier.

A big part of my help is to encourage her to seek reform for the S.O.R.. There must be some way for deserving people to be removed from the List without waiting for 25 years. Help make the Registry one that will warn people of potentially dangerous people, not hard working, loving mothers! (or fathers)

Thank you
Dave Avery

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Avery", with a long, sweeping underline.